(c) if so, the present status of the proposal and by when it is likely to be cleared?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) The earlier proposal received from the State (Karnataka) in this regard was not considered since declaration of new tiger reserves was not viewed favoueably in the 38th meeting of the Steering Committee of Project Tiger held on 12.4.2005.

(b) and (c) Subsequently, based on a proposal received in this regard in December, 2008, the State has been advised to provide the ecological/landscape parameters, apart from the statutory imperatives vis-a-vis the provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, for needful action from the National Tiger Conservation Authority. The response from the State is awaited.

Supply of KG D-6 gas to steel industry

*435. SHRI VIRENDRA BHATIA:
SHRI NAND KISHORE YADAV:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has taken any decision to supply KG D-6 gas to steel industry;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it would be in accordance with the Gas Utilization Policy and the decision of the Empowered Group of Ministers (EGOM);

(d) whether the supply of gas to steel industry would be given preference over additional allocation to existing power plants operating at lower Plant Load Factors; and

(e) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MURLI DEORA): (a) to (e) The Empowered Group of Ministers (EGoM) constituted to decide issues pertaining to pricing and commercial utilization of gas under the New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) 'decided that MOP&NG should be authorized to take decisions regarding supply of unutilized quantity of natural gas including from the City Gas Distribution (CGD) sector. However, while making such allocations, to avoid any legal complications, priority should be accorded to gas based steel plants which had been given APM gas allocation earlier but are not getting gas supply in accordance with the commitments made. Allocations should also be made to the existing gas power plants and to other power plants including captive power plants depending upon the availability of the unutilized gas.'

Accordingly, on the recommendation of Ministry of Steel, 3.75 million metric standard cubic meters per day (mmscmd) natural gas has been allocated from KG D6 field to existing gas-based steel plants, so as to partially meet their requirement. Further, the unutilized quantity, available because of low offtake by some priority sector customers, is being supplied on fallback

basis to power sector, so as to further enhance the Plant Load Factor (PLF) of existing power plants.

Reservation for Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians

*436. SHRI BHAGAT SINGH KOSHYARI: Will the Minister of MINORITY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the National Commission for Minorities has recommended reservation for Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians live in horrible conditions; and

(d) if so, the steps taken to uplift their economic, social and educational status?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF MINORITY AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHEED): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) In 1995, National Commission for Minorities (NCM), under Section 9(1) of the National Commission for Minorities Act 1992, recommended that Scheduled Caste (SC)/Scheduled Tribe (ST) converts to Christianity or Islam should continue to enjoy all privileges and benefits as SCs/STs on par with the SC/ST converts to Buddhism. Further, in 1997, NCM, under Section 9(1) of the NCM Act 1992, recommended for the outright removal of the Proviso in Constitution (Scheduled Caste) Order, 1950 which confines the SC status strictly to three specified religions. Further, the National Commission for Minorities, in their Annual Report for 2006-07, have recommended that Christian and Muslim dalits must be given the benefit of affirmative action through reservation.

(c) and (d) The following schemes are being implemented by the Ministry of Minority Affairs for the upliftment of minority communities:-

1. Pre-matric scholarship scheme.
2. Post-matric scholarship scheme.
3. Merit-cum-means scholarship scheme.
4. Free Coaching and allied scheme.
5. Multi-sectoral development programme.
6. Equity contribution to National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation (NNDFC) for implementation of various lending and promotional schemes.
7. Grant-in-aid to Maulana Azad Education Foundation (MAEF) for implementation of schemes for promoting education.
8. Prime Minister's 15 Point Programme for the Welfare of Minorities is being implemented to ensure that the benefits of various government programmes/schemes reach the